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ABSTRACT

A 50-item questionnaire was developed with the assistance of a group of five current truant, five former truant, and five nontruant junior high students for distribution to students and teachers at one junior high within the Iowa City Community School District. Survey results indicated that most student and teacher respondents believed that truancy was highly related to peer influence and that improved relations and communications between students, teachers, and parents would result in improved attendance. Student and teacher respondents were generally in agreement on causes of truancy but differed somewhat on solutions, with teachers favoring increased structure and students favoring a more open academic environment. (Author)

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PROJECT PROBE

A Student Conducted Study of Truancy

A Project Report

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ABSTRACT

A 50 item questionnaire was developed with the assistance of a group of five current truant, five former truant, and five nontruant junior high students for distribution to students and teachers at one junior high within the Iowa City Community School District. Survey results indicated that most student and teacher respondents believed that truancy was highly related to peer influence and that improved relations and communications between students, teachers, and parents would result in improved attendance. Student and teacher respondents were generally in agreement on causes of truancy but differed somewhat on solutions, with teachers favoring increased structure and students favoring a more open academic environment.

Student absenteeism and truancy once again ranked highest as problems confronted by school administrators, according to the results of an annual survey of members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Yet, despite continued concern, research is limited (NAASP 1975, 1978). Surveys of student and teacher attitudes toward truancy or perceived causes and solutions were not available. Project Probe attempted to fill part of this void through the development and distribution of a research questionnaire. A unique aspect of the questionnaire was that it was developed with the assistance of a group of five current truant, five former truant and five nontruant junior high students for distribution at their school. These students administered the questionnaire to teachers and students and were also involved in the interpretation of data and dissemination of information (refer to part one of this article for information on this process).

Method

A 50 item questionnaire was developed for distribution to students and teachers at one junior high within the Iowa City Community School District.[1] The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Part one contained 18 items, each a possible reason why students skip class. Part two consisted of 16 items, each an idea for improving attendance. Respondents indicated to what extent each item represented a cause for truancy on part one, or a possible solution to the truancy problem on part two. A five choice likert scale was provided with choices ranging from often to never on part one, and definitely yes to definitely no on part two. Part three contained 13

items designed to elicit information on respondent experiences and attitudes toward school and truancy. Part four consisted of three multiple choice items developed to test respondent knowledge of the local school district's policy on truancy.

A cluster sampling technique was employed for selecting student respondents. A list of language arts classes was obtained, classes were written on slips of paper, placed in boxes by grade level, and then randomly drawn from boxes. All students at the school had an equal chance of being selected because language arts courses are a requirement for all students at all grade levels. Twelve classes were selected - four each from seventh, eighth, and ninth grade.

Questionnaires were completed in one school day during selected language arts class periods. Student assistants worked in teams of two under the supervision of project staff. Standard directions were written and maintained. One student was responsible for reading directions, while the other functioned as a monitor, distributing and collecting materials.

Approximately 33% of the student body, or 92% (N = 261) of the original sample, completed questionnaires; 5% (N = 14) of the original sample were absent; and 3% (N = 8) elected not to respond. The respondent group was 48% male and 52% female, with 34% seventh graders, 36% eighth graders, and 30% ninth graders. Obtained proportions are accurate within three percentage points of actual population proportions.

Questionnaires were also distributed to teachers by faculty mail, with instructions for completion and return attached. Approximately 60% (N = 29) returned questionnaires. This group was 44% male and 56% female, with 37%

teachers of seventh grade, 22% eighth grade, 15% ninth grade, and 26% multiple grades.

Results[2]

Perceived Causes and Solutions of Truancy

Student and teacher respondents were in agreement that students often or frequently skip classes because they have friends who skip; over 70% shared this position.[3] The attraction of fun activities outside the school environment was also considered a factor by over 50% teacher and 60% student respondents. More than 50% student and 70% teacher respondents shared the position that study halls were often or frequently skipped because students do not think of study halls in the same way as class. Cigarette smoking was viewed as a factor, with over 50% of both teacher and student respondents reporting that they think students often or frequently skip classes to smoke cigarettes. More than 50% of student respondents were also of the opinion that students skip because they have difficulty with school work, do not want to work at teacher levels of expectation, or because they feel classes are a waste of time.

The majority of teacher and student respondents did not feel that inattendance was caused by a lack of sufficient time between classes; over 50% student and 70% teacher respondents shared this position. Similarly, more than 50% student and 60% teacher respondents did not believe that inattendance was related to short lunch shifts. Furthermore, inattendance was not related to overly strict schools, according to 60% of the teacher respon-

dents, though almost 70% of student respondents would argue that it was not caused by lack of strictness on the part of school administration. A large number of respondents were uncertain of the influence of difficulties at home or unpopularity at school on inattendance.

Better teacher-student relationships were considered to be an important factor in improving attendance by over 70% student and 50% teacher respondents. Contact between schools and parents was also considered important by more than 80% teacher and 50% student respondents. Over 50% of both student and teacher respondents shared an opinion that additional help with school work could improve attendance. A majority of teachers felt that stricter attendance rules and use of the juvenile court system would also improve attendance, with over 60% sharing this position. Additional extracurricular activities and more opportunities for students to voice opinions on school matters were considered as means of improving attendance by over 60% of student respondents, with more than 50% also recommending improvements in the physical environment of the school.

A majority of student respondents felt that corporal punishment would not improve attendance; over 80% shared this position. Nor did they feel that suspension or stricter attendance rules would be effective, as was evidenced by the opinions of over 50% of student respondents. Teacher respondents did not feel that more time between classes would improve attendance; 80% shared this position. Over 60% of teacher respondents also felt that improvements in the physical environment of the school would not affect change in attendance patterns. More extracurricular activities, hot breakfast programs, and more opportunities for students to voice

opinions on school matters were not considered as means of improving attendance by the majority of teacher respondents, with over 50% sharing these views. A large number of respondents were uncertain of the effects of peer or adult counseling on truancy.

Attitudes and Knowledge About Truancy

Over 70% of student respondents reported that they enjoy school, with 60% of male and 80% female respondents reporting this opinion; 95% of teacher respondents enjoyed school as students. More than 70% of student respondents reported involvement in activities such as sports, clubs, or drama; 90% of teacher respondents were also involved in such activities as students. Still, both student and teacher respondents indicated dissatisfaction with how their school is run, with 60% of both groups expressing this opinion. Around 60% of student respondents indicated that there were no adults available at school to whom they could talk about problems. Interestingly, 70% of teacher respondents reportedly experienced similar feelings as students.

Truancy is considered a big problem at school by nearly 50% of student respondents, with 40% uncertain and 10% indicating it is not a problem; 50% of teacher respondents indicated it was a problem, with 25% uncertain and 25% reporting no problem. Nearly 30% of student and teacher respondents reportedly skipped at least one class as students; 6% of the student respondents said that they skipped regularly, while none of the teacher respondents described themselves as a regular skipper. Among students, twice as many male as female respondents have skipped a class and twice as many males skipped regularly.

Truancy is caused more by personal problems of truants than by how the school is run, according to 40% of students and nearly 70% teacher respondents. Of the remaining student respondents, 40% were uncertain and 20% disagreed, while all but a fraction of remaining teacher respondents were uncertain. Students should be punished for skipping classes, according to 80% teacher and over 50% student respondents; they should not be given special rewards for attendance, according to nearly 60% teacher and student respondents. Almost 70% of teacher and 60% student respondents felt that the school should look at every case of truancy individually and treat students according to individual needs, rather than maintaining consistency for all students.

Both teacher and student respondents had a good knowledge of the local school district's policy on truancy. Over 80% teacher and 70% student respondents knew that truancy could result in suspension; 80% teacher and 70% student respondents knew that students are treated differently according to the number of truancies accumulated; 90% teacher, but only 40% student respondents knew that skipping one class is counted as an incident of truancy just as skipping the whole day is considered as one truancy incident. Interestingly, even though knowledge of policy was demonstrated, most students reported that they did not know the policy; 60% ninth, 20% eighth, and 30% seventh graders said that they knew the policy. In contrast, almost 80% of responding teachers reported that they were familiar with the policy.

Discussion

The questionnaire was well received by both student and teacher respondents, who generally identified similar causes for truancy, but differed on sclutions. More teachers than students reported that truancy was related to personal problems of truants rather than to the operation of the school. Yet, both respondent groups expressed uncertainty as to whether specific personal problems, such as difficulties at home or unpopularity at school, were related to truancy. Similarly, they expressed uncertainty about the effectiveness of methods for alleviating personal problems, such as peer or adult counseling.

The school schedule, including time between classes and length of lunch shifts, was not considered as a causal factor. Instead, student and teacher respondents viewed truancy as highly related to peer influence and also to what might be described as more immediate reasons, such as the desire to do something fun outside of school or the desire to smoke cigarettes. In other words, respondents were more inclined to accept truant acts at face value as specific behaviors in themselves, rather than as a symptom of underlying problems. Student respondents also felt that a lack of ability and/or desire to function adequately in the classroom could influence attendance.

Respondents believed that improved relations and communication between students, teachers, and parents could result in improved attendance. In addition, teacher respondents were in favor of increasing structure through stricter attendance rules and, when necessary, use of the juvenile court system. In contrast, students opposed increased structure and, instead,

favored an open school environment with more student voice in school matters. Both groups were dissatisfied with the way their school was operated; judging from responses, teachers may believe it is too unstructured, while students feel it is overly strict.

Slightly more than half of the respondents described truancy as a major problem at their school, despite a significant decrease in absenteeism during the past year. Responses are, of course, influenced by the selection of a micro or macro perspective on the problem. In either case, respondents feel that the problem should be handled by punishing truant students rather than by rewarding those who attend, and feel it is more important to individualize policy to meet student needs than to maintain consistent procedures.

Possibly the most significant finding of the survey was that, despite availability of counselors, social workers, psychologists, and others trained in helping skills, 60% of student respondents reported that there were no adults available within the school environment that they felt they could talk to about problems. Perhaps even more interesting was the fact that 70% of teacher respondents indicated that they held the same opinion when they were students.

This finding was particularly interesting to the three staff members involved in Project Probe who had worked with truant students using conventional counseling techniques. Truant students were often reluctant to communicate with adults in a counseling situation, perhaps because most of their previous experiences with adults had been with authority figures in problem situations. Consequently, results were mixed and Project Probe was

was implemented because of an inability to reach certain truant students through traditional methods. After involvement in Project Probe and establishment of the necessary requisite relationships, truant students were often able to benefit from counseling. Still, counseling may not always be an appropriate or preferred intervention technique. Special projects, informal group activities, and other alternative approaches may be more appropriate and effective with some students.

References

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASP). Absenteeism: the perpetual problem. The Practitioner, 1978, 5 (1), 12 pp.

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASP). Student attendance and absenteeism. The Practitioner, 1975, 1 (1), 12 pp.

Footnotes

[1] See Appendix for complete copies of the surveys.

[2] A partial listing of raw results is available in the Appendix.

[3] On likert scale items such as this, responses were generally shared among five possible choices, with a reasonably large number selecting the middle (No Opinion) choice. Therefore, when 70% of the population reportedly shares an opinion, the remaining 30% are distributed among those not sharing the opinion, as well as those uncommitted to either position. It would be incorrect to assume that the entire remaining 30% held a position directly opposite to the majority opinion.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to express their appreciation to the many individuals and organizations who supported Project Probe and contributed to its successful completion.

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Special thanks are also due to the Iowa City Community School District and, in particular, to Dr. David Cronin, Superintendent of Schools and Dr. Guerin Thompson, Executive Director of Curriculum.

We are also grateful to the students and faculty of Northwest Junior High School, where the project was conducted. The support and cooperation of Norbert Meyer, Principal and Will Roth, Assistant Principal was especially appreciated.

Finally, a special note of appreciation is expressed to Tom Stinard, Research Consultant, Grant Wood Area Education Agency for the consultation provided throughout the project.

APPENDIX

PROJECT PROBE

TRUANCY QUESTIONNAIRE

DO NOT BEGIN WORKING UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO.

How to Complete Information Section:

Under number one blacken:

0 if you are male
1 if you are female

Under number two blacken:

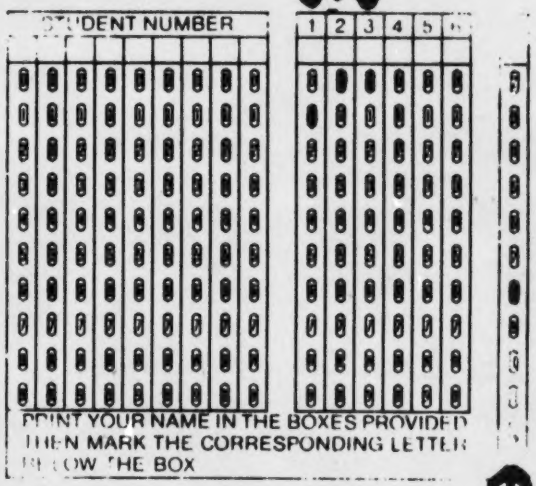
0 if you live in Iowa City
1 if you live in Coralville
2 if you live in another community
3 if you live in a rural area

Under number three blacken:

0 if you smoke cigarettes regularly
1 if you do not smoke cigarettes regularly

Under grade blacken:

7 if you are a seventh grader
8 if you are an eighth grader
9 if you are a ninth grader

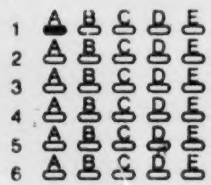


Sample Question:

Do you enjoy school lunches?

a) yes b) no

If your answer to this question were yes, then you would blacken A on the answer sheet like this:



PROJECT PROBE

PART I

In your opinion how often, if ever, are each of the following reasons why students skip school?

1. Do students skip because the school day is too long?
   a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

2. Do students skip after lunch because the lunch shift is too short?
   a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

3. Do students skip study hall because they don't think of it as a class?
   a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

4. Do students skip class to smoke cigarettes?
   a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

5. Do students skip because they feel classes are a waste of time?
   a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

6. Do students skip because teachers of the classes that they skip are not strict enough about attendance?
   a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

7. Do students skip classes because the principal and assistant principal are not strict enough about attendance?
   a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

8. Do students skip classes because they feel some teachers do not like them?
   a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

9. Do students skip classes because there is not enough time between classes?
   a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

10. Do students skip because they don't have the assignment that is due for that class or they have a test that day?
    a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

11. Do students skip gym because they have to dress out?
    a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

12. Do students skip because they have problems at home?
    a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

13. Do students skip because they are less popular at school than other students?

a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

14. Do students skip classes because they have trouble with school work?

a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

15. Do students skip classes because they have friends who skip?

a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

16. Do students skip because they don't want to work as hard as teachers expect them to work?

a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

17. Do students skip because schools are too strict?

a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

18. Do students skip classes because there are other fun things to do outside of school?

a) often b) frequently c) sometimes d) rarely e) never

PART II

In your opinion, would the follwoing ideas improve student attendance?

19. Would a hot breakfast program improve attendance?

a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

20. Would painting hallways and lockers and having carpets and windows improve attendance?

a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

21. Would more opportunities for extracurricular activites, such as intramural sports or clubs, improve attendance?

a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

22. Would offering more electives such as vocational (job training) classes improve attendance?

a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

23. Would peer counseling (students counseling other students) improve attendance?

a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

24. Would having stricter attendance rules improve attendance?

a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

25. Would having more contact between schools and parents improve attendance?
a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

26. Would sending students who skip classes to court improve attendance?
a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

27. Would physical punishment (spanking) improve attendance?
a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

28. Would giving students more time to get to classes improve attendance?
a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

29. Would counseling students who skip improve attendance?
a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

30. Would better teacher-student relationships improve attendance?
a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

31. Would suspending students for truancy improve attendance?
a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

32. Would extra help with school work improve attendance?
a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

33. Would an alternative school like PS 4 located within the building at Northwest improve attendance?
a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

34. Would more opportunities for students to have a say in school matters improve attendance?
a) definitely yes b) probably yes c) uncertain d) probably no e) definitely no

PART III

Please answer the following questions.

35. Do you enjoy school?
a) yes b) no

36. Do you participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, debate or drama?
a) yes b) no

37. Have you ever skipped a class?
a) yes b) no

38. Do you skip regularly?

a) yes b) no

39. Is there an adult at Northwest Junior High that you feel you can talk to about problems?

a) yes b) no

40. Are you satisfied with the way your school is run?

a) yes b) no

41. Do you think truancy is a big problem at Northwest Junior High?

a) yes b) no c) don't know

42. Do you know your school policy on truancy?

a) yes b) no

43. Do you think truancy is caused more by personal problems of truants than it is by how the school is run?

a) yes b) no c) don't know

44. Do you think that students who don't attend class should be punished?

a) yes b) no c) don't know

45. Do you think students who do attend class should be rewarded?

a) yes b) no c) don't know

46. Do you think that the school should treat all cases of truancy the same for all students?

a) yes b) no c) don't know

47. Do you think that the school should look at each case of truancy individually and treat students differently according to individual needs?

a) yes b) no c) don't know

PART IV

The next three questions are about the truancy policy at Northwest Junior High. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.

48. According to the truancy policy, students can be suspended for skipping school.

a) true b) false c) don't know

49. According to the truancy policy, students who have skipped school five times are treated the same as students who have skipped school one time.

a) true b) false c) don't know

50. According to the truancy policy, skipping one class is a truancy just as skipping the whole day is a truancy.

a) true b) false c) don't know

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please place your answer sheet inside your test booklet. Answer sheets and test booklets will be picked up at the end of the class period.

Modifications Made in Questionnaire for Teachers

Teachers were given the same questionnaire as students, with the exception that questions #35, #36, #37, #38, and #39 were modified to read as follows:

35. Did you enjoy school when you were a student?

    a) yes b) no

36 Did you participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, debate, or drama when you were a student?

    a) yes b) no

37. Did you ever skip a class?

    a) yes b) no

38. Did you skip regularly?

    a) yes b) no

39. Was there an adult at your junior high that you felt you could talk to about problems when you were a student?

    a) yes b) no

Note: In order to maintain a standard administration format these directions were given to all groups of students taking the questionnaire.

PROJECT PROBE

Directions for Administering the Questionnaire to Student Respondents

1. During the semester, a group of Northwest Junior High students have been developing a questionnaire on truancy (or skipping classes). Your class and several other classes have been selected to complete the questionnaire. Completion of the questionnaire is optional, however your cooperation will be appreciated. This questionnaire gives you an opportunity to express your views about your school and all information will be kept confidential. You will receive the results of this questionnaire at a later date.

   Please listen carefully to these directions before beginning. Do not begin to answer the questionnaire until told to do so.

2. You have been given a copy of the questionnaire and an answer sheet. You are to record all of your responses on the answer sheet. Do not make any marks on the questionnaire itself.

3. Since this questionnaire is confidential, you should not write your name on the questionnaire.

4. Do not make any other marks on the questionnaire unless told to do so.

5. Use only a number two pencil in marking the questionnaire. Do not use a pen.

6. Pick up your answer sheet and turn it sideways like this (demonstrate). Look at the boxes numbered one through six located here on your answer sheet. (Point to the boxes.)

   Does everyone see these boxes?

7. Under box number one, please blacken zero if you are a male and one if you are a female. Does everyone understand? Blacken zero if you are male and one if you are female. (Repeat if necessary and wait until everyone appears to be done.) Is everyone done? Are there any questions?

8. Under box number two, please blacken zero if you live within the city limits of Iowa City; blacken one if you live within the city limits of Coralville; blacken two if you live in another community, such as North Liberty; and blacken three if you live anywhere outside the city limits of a town. Does everyone understand?

   Blacken zero for Iowa City; one for Coralville; two for another community; and three if you live in a rural area. (Wait until everyone appears to be done.) Is everyone done? Are there any questions?

9. To the right of the six numbered boxes is a box that says "grade." Does everyone see this box? (Check to see that everyone sees.) In this space you are to blacken either a 7, 8, or 9 to show what grade in school you are in. (Wait until everyone appears to be done.) Is everyone done? Are there any questions?

10. Now turn your answer sheet right side up like this (demonstrate) so that you will be ready to answer the questionnaire when you are told to do so. Notice that the answer sheet is numbered down rather than across the page. (Point to show that numbers go down the page.)

11. There are a total of 50 items on this questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers. Instead, we are interested in your ideas and opinions. On some questions you will answer yes or no. On others you will answer with responses like: sometimes, often, or never. Just blacken the letter of the response that you have selected for each item in the appropriate place on the answer sheet.

    For example, on the cover page of your questionnaire is a sample question. If your answer to the question is yes, you would blacken in the space under the letter "a" on the answer sheet as shown in the example. Does everyone understand? (Look to see if anyone has raised their hand.)

    If you have any questions while you are answering the questionnaire, raise your hand and one of the monitors will come to answer your question.

    After you have completed the questionnaire, place the answer sheet inside the questionnaire booklet and leave it flat on your desk. Are there any other questions? (Look to see if anyone has raised their hand.) If not, you may open your questionnaire booklet and begin working.

Directions for Teacher Respondents

Questionnaires were placed in faculty mailboxes with this note:

TO: Northwest Teaching Faculty

FROM: Project Probe Students and Staff

RE: Project Probe Questionnaire

Attached is a Project Probe truancy questionnaire for teachers. Students were able to complete a similar questionnaire in less than twenty minutes. Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and place it in Tom Conway's mailbox by Monday, April 16, 1979

Contact Tom Conway if you have any questions about questionnaire completion.

Thank you.

The following directions appeared inside the front cover of the questionnaire:

Information Items

Please circle one.

A. Your Sex
   1) Male
   2) Female

B. Where You Live
   1) Iowa City
   2) Coralville
   3) Another Community
   4) Rural Area

C. Grade You Teach
   1) Primarily Seventh Grade
   2) Primarily Eighth Grade
   3) Primarily Ninth Grade

Directions for Questionnaire Completion

On all items please circle the letter of the response that comes closest to your opinion.

Note: All interested students and teachers were provided with this typweritten copy of student results.

PROJECT PROBE

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

During the semester, a group of Northwest Junior High students developed a questionnaire on truancy. About 1/3 of the students at Northwest were randomly selected to complete the questionnaire. These are the results.

Students think students skip class for these reasons:

1. Over 70 percent (7 out of 10) of the students who filled out the questionnaire felt that students <u>often</u> or <u>frequently</u> skip classes because they have friends who skip.
2. Over 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the students felt that students <u>often</u> or <u>frequently</u> skip classes because there are other fun things to do outside of school.
3. Over 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the students felt that students <u>often</u> or <u>frequently</u> skip study hall because they don't think of it as a class. They also felt that students skip class to smoke cigarettes or skip because they have trouble with schoolwork, don't want to work as hard as teachers expect them to work, or feel that classes are a waste of time.
4. Over 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the females and 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the seventh and eighth graders felt that students <u>often</u> or <u>frequently</u> skip because they don't have an assignment that is due or have a test; 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the eighth graders also felt that students <u>often</u> or <u>frequently</u> skip because they feel some teachers do not like them.

Students do not think students skip class for these reasons:

1. Almost 70 percent (7 out of 10) of the students who filled out the questionnaire felt that students <u>rarely</u> or <u>never</u> skip classes because the principal or assistant principal are not strict enough about attendance.
2. Over 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the students felt that students <u>rarely</u> or <u>never</u> skip class because the lunch shift is too short or because there is not enough time between classes.

Student ideas of what will improve attendance:

1. Over 70 percent (7 out of 10) of the students who filled out the questionnaire felt that better teacher-student relationships would improve attendance.
2. Over 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the students felt that more opportunities for extracurricular activities such as intramural sports or clubs would improve attendance. They also felt that more time to get to classes and more opportunities for students to have a say in school matters would improve attendance.

3. Over 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the students felt that painting hallways and lockers, extra help with schoolwork and more contact between schools and parents would improve attendance.

4. Over 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the boys and 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the seventh and ninth graders felt that vocational (job training) classes would improve attendance.

Student ideas of what will not improve attendance:

1. Over 80 percent (8 out of 10) of the students who filled out the questionnaire did not feel that physical punishment (spanking) would improve attendance.

2. Over 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the students did not feel that suspending students from school or stricter attendance rules would improve attendance.

Other information:

1. Over 70 percent (7 out of 10) of the students who filled out the questionnaire reported that they enjoy school; 80 percent (8 out of 10) of the girls and 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the boys enjoy school.

2. Over 70 percent (7 out of 10) of the students reported that they participate in extracurricular activities such as sports or drama. Participation in extracurricular activities increases with grade; almost 70 percent of the seventh graders, 75 percent of the eighth graders and over 80 percent of the ninth graders participate in extracurricular activities.

3. Over 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the students filling out the questionnaire said that there was not an adult at Northwest that they felt they could talk to about problems.

4. Over 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the students filling out the questionnaire reported that they are not satisfied with the way the school is run. Over 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the seventh and eighth graders and over 80 percent (8 out of 10) of the ninth graders reported that they are not satisfied with the way school is run.

5. About 30 percent (3 out of 10) of the students said that they have skipped a class. Almost twice as many boys as girls have skipped a class. About 20 percent (2 out of 10) of the seventh graders, 30 percent (3 out of 10) of the eighth graders, and over 40 percent (4 out of 10) of the ninth graders have skipped a class.

6. Only 6 percent (6 out of 100) of the students say that they skip regularly. Twice as many boys as girls skip regularly. About 6 percent (6 out of 100) of the seventh graders, 2 percent (2 out of 100) of the eighth graders and 8 percent (8 out of 100) of the ninth graders reported that they skip regularly.

7. Almost 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the students felt that truancy is a big problem at Northwest. About 10 percent (1 out of 10) said it is

not a big problem. Almost 40 percent (4 out of 10) of the students didn't know whether truancy is a big problem or not at Northwest.

8. More than 40 percent (4 out of 10) of the students felt that truancy is caused more by personal problems of truants than it is by the way the school is run. More than 20 percent (2 out of 10) of the students felt that truancy is caused more by how the school is run than by personal problems of truants. The remaining 40 percent (4 out of 10) did not know.

9. More than 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the students felt that students should be punished for skipping class. Slightly less than 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the seventh graders, 55 percent (55 out of 100) of the eighth graders, and almost 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the ninth graders felt that students should be punished for skipping class.

10. Almost 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the students felt that students should not be rewarded for attending class. More than 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the seventh graders, 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the eighth graders, and almost 70 percent (7 out of 10) of the ninth graders felt that students should not be rewarded for attending class.

11. Over 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the students felt that the school should not treat all cases of truancy the same for all students. Around 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the boys and 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the girls held this opinion. About 45 percent (45 out of 100) of the seventh graders and about 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the eighth and ninth graders had this opinion.

12. Over 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the students felt that the school should look at each case of truancy individually and treat students according to individual needs. Over 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the boys and 70 percent (7 out of 10) of the girls held this opinion. Over 50 percent (5 out of 10) of the seventh graders, and around 70 percent (7 out of 10) of the eighth and ninth graders held this opinion.

13. About 60 percent (6 out of 10) of the ninth graders said that they knew the truancy policy while only about 20 percent (2 out of 10) of the seventh graders and only about 30 percent (3 out of 10) of the eighth graders said that they knew the truancy policy.

14. The questionnaire contained three questions to test student knowledge of the truancy policy. On all three questions, ninth graders did better than the eighth graders who did better than the seventh graders. Also, girls did better than boys. Nearly 70 percent (7 out of 10) of the students knew that students could be suspended for skipping school. About 70 percent (7 out of 10) of the students knew that students who have skipped school five times are not treated the same as students who have skipped only once. Only about 40 percent (4 out of 10) of the students knew that skipping one class is counted as a truancy just as skipping a whole day is a truancy.

Note: All interested students and teachers were provided with this typewritten copy of teacher results.

PROJECT PROBE

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

During the semester, a group of Northwest Junior High students developed a questionnaire on truancy. Northwest teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire. About 60 percent of those teachers returned the questionnaire. These are the results.

Teachers think students skip class for the following reasons:

1. Over 70 percent (7 of 10) of the teachers who filled out the questionnaire felt that students <u>often</u> or <u>frequently</u> skip classes because they have friends who skip, and skip study hall because they don't think of it as a class.
2. Over 50 percent (5 of 10) of the teachers felt that students <u>often</u> or <u>frequently</u> skip classes because there are other fun things to do outside of school or skip class to smoke cigarettes.

Teachers do not think students skip class for the following reasons:

1. Over 70 percent (7 of 10) of the teachers who filled out the questionnaire felt that students <u>rarely</u> or <u>never</u> skip classes because there is not enough time between classes.
2. Over 60 percent (6 of 10) of the teachers felt that students <u>rarely</u> or <u>never</u> skip class because the lunch shift is too short or because schools are too strict.

Teacher ideas of what will improve attendance:

1. Over 80 percent (8 of 10) of the teachers who filled out the questionnaire felt that more contact between schools and parents would improve attendance.
2. Over 60 percent (6 of 10) of the teachers felt that stricter attendance rules and sending students to court would improve attendance.
3. Over 50 percent (5 of 10) of the teachers felt that better teacher-student relationships and extra help with school work would improve attendance.

Teacher ideas of what will not improve attendance:

1. Over 80 percent (8 of 10) of the teachers who filled out the questionnaire did not feel that giving students more time to get to classes would improve attendance.
2. Over 60 percent (6 of 10) of the teachers did not feel that painting hallways and lockers would improve attendance.
3. Over 50 percent (5 of 10) of the teachers did not feel that a hot breakfast program, more extracurricular activities, or more opportunities for students to have a say in school matters would improve attendance.

Other information:

1. Over 95 percent (19 of 20) of the teachers who filled out the questionnaire reported that they enjoyed school when they were students.
2. Over 90 percent (9 of 10) of the teachers reported that they participated in extracurricular activities such as sports or drama when they were students.
3. Over 70 percent (7 of 10) of the teachers filling out the questionnaire said that there was not an adult at their school that they felt they could talk to about problems when they were students.
4. Over 60 percent (6 of 10) of the teachers filling out the questionnaire reported that they are not satisfied with the way the school is run.
5. About 30 percent (3 of 10) of the teachers said that they skipped at least one class when they were students, but no teacher skipped regularly.
6. Almost 50 percent (5 of 10) of the teachers felt that truancy is a big problem at Northwest.
7. About 70 percent (7 of 10) of the teachers felt that truancy is caused more by personal problems of truants than it is by the way the school is run.
8. More than 80 percent (8 of 10) of the teachers felt that students should be punished for skipping class.
9. Almost 60 percent (6 of 10) of the teachers felt that students should not be rewarded for attending class.
10. Over 50 percent (5 of 10) of the teachers felt that the school should not treat all cases of truancy the same for all students.
11. Almost 70 percent (7 of 10) of the teachers felt that the school should look at each case of truancy individually and treat students according to individual needs.
12. About 80 percent (8 of 10) of the teachers said they knew the truancy policy.
13. The questionnaire contained three questions to test knowledge of the truancy policy. Over 80 percent (8 of 10) of the teachers knew that students could be suspended for skipping school. About 80 percent (8 of 10) of the teachers knew that students who have skipped school five times are not treated the same as students who have skipped only once. Almost 90 percent (9 of 10) of the teachers knew that skipping one class is counted as a truancy just as skipping a whole day is a truancy.